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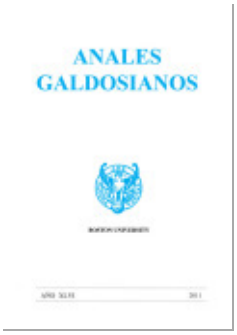

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PARDO BAZÁN'S LITERARY USE OF THREE UNIQUELY PERSONAL NICKNAMES: GEDEÓN, SURIÑA, FEÍTA

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Although the multifaceted use of nicknames has been studied in the novels of Galdós and in Leopoldo Alas's *La Regenta*,[1] to date there has been no study of Pardo Bazán's artistry with nicknames. However, we may be very sure that Doña Emilia delighted in the creation and employment of sobriquets, because she not only did so in her letters to Galdós during the time of their intimacy,[2] but she also has her narrator (Mauro Pareja) confirm in the novel *Memorias de un solterón* that "[E]n esta Marineda [La Coruña] tienen buena sombra para motes" (I, 85). Nicknames are continually present from the first of Doña Emilia's novels (*Pascual López*) onward. However, it is only later in her career—after her polemics with Pereda, a love affair with Galdós, and derogatory remarks about her personal appearance by critics—that she was motivated to employ uniquely personal nicknames from these experiences. The aim of the present study is to begin consideration of the various ways Pardo Bazán uses nicknames in her novels by focusing upon three of these uniquely personal, self-reflecting, nicknames which differentiate her artistry from that of Galdós and Leopold Alas.

Pardo Bazán was a major literary figure and as such engaged in so many related activities, that it is no surprise that she should become involved in literary polemics. Her introduction of Naturalism into Spain with the *La cuestión palpitante* and the utilization of Naturalist practices in such novels as *La tribuna*, *Los pazos de Ulloa*, and *La madre naturaleza*, not only caused a life-long separation from her husband,[3] but it also offended many readers and fellow authors. Moreover, because she was also a literary critic, reviewing and passing judgment on the works of other writers, it is understandable that other authors should reciprocate. Although she was one of the leading novelists of the period, the fact that she was a woman working in a field dominated by men did not, to say the least, discourage attacks on her and her creative fiction. Doña Emilia's polemical exchanges were so important that they are generally included in books dealing with her life and works, as well as being included in her *Obras completas*; her adversaries included such notables as "Clarín" (Leopoldo Alas), "Fray Candil" (Emilio Bobadilla), Menéndez y Pelayo, Palacio Valdés, and Pereda.[4] Of all the polemics, the long-running exchanges with Pereda—including her review of his *Nubes de Estío* (1891)—seem to have irritated Pardo Bazán the most—and her creation and utilization of the name "Gedeón" is first seen not long before that review.

This sobriquet is exactly the same as the given name of the main character in Pereda's *El buey suelto*, and evidence of Pardo Bazán's polemic with Pereda concerning his 1878 work is seen in three of her novels as she repeatedly references Pereda's protagonist. Thus in *Insolación* (1889) the female protagonist Asís gives to a male servant whose baptismal name is Perfecto, the nickname "'*Imperfecto*' por sus *gedeonadas*" (105; ch. 13). Then in *Doña Milagros* (1894) the eponymous protagonist has in her employ a young male servant, whom she "por sus torpezas apodaba Gedeón" (134; ch. 8). And Doña Milagros

(with her Andalusian manner of speaking) specifies some of the "*gedeonadas*":

Gedeón había servido en el mismo *asafate* el chocolate de ella y la botas *embetunás* de su marido, Gedeón había cepillado un traje de lana a pintitas, y persuadido de que cada pinta era una mancha, medio había deshecho la tela; Gedeón había colgado el cuadrito de San Antonio cabeza abajo, Gedeón, con las abrazaderas de la cortinas de la sala, había adornado la mesa. [. . .Y] hay que colar un caldo, y tengo miedo que ese Gedeón me lo cuele por un *calsetín*. (134; ch. 8)

Like Pereda's protagonist, Doña Milagros's "Gedeón" is a "montañés," and she requests that her husband find a replacement: "desenterrar un mozo listo, limpio y útil, 'una cosa decente'" (135; ch. 8). Subsequently, in *Memorias de un solterón* (1896), Pardo Bazán becomes more patent. Her own bachelor protagonist (Mauro Pareja) insists:

Yo no soy como aquel *Gedeón*, el héroe de Pereda, un vicioso burdo y sin miaja de pesquis, que no sabía ponerse de acuerdo consigo mismo, y que, por incapacidad, necesitaba con urgencia mujer, como los chicos niñera. Ninguna persona de mediano criterio tropezará en los inconvenientes en que tropezaba aquel zanguango. (92-93; ch. 1)

Pereda's criticism of the conduct of the female protagonist of Doña Emilia's highly autobiographical *Insolación* (1889) contributed greatly to the intensity of the prolonged polemic between the two writers. Pereda in *Las comezones de la Señora Pardo Bazán* charges:

[L]a otra marquesa, la [protagonista] de V., [. . .] se va de buenas a primeras con un galán, a quien sólo conoce por haberle saludado la noche anterior en una tertulia, a la Romería de San Isidro; y allí se mete con él en figones y merenderos. Se emborracha, etc., etc., hasta volver ambos ahítos y saciados de todo lo imaginable, para continuar viviendo amancebados *a la vista* del lector. (44-45)

In reply, Doña Emilia straightforwardly justified her own and her fictional character's conduct. In the sphere of intimate communications, to her lover Galdós, she confessed that only three days after he had left her at the 1888 *Exposición Internacional* in Barcelona, she committed "[con José Lázaro Galdiano] un error momentáneo de los sentidos, fruto de circunstancias imprevistas " (*Cartas* 24).[5] To Pereda, who she felt was "intentando herirme [. . . con] *Insolación*," she replied in *Una y no más… Al público y a Pereda* (1891) that her character is more moral than the title protagonist of Pereda's *La Montálvez* (1888). Moreover her protagonist, she says, committed only an "imprudente desliz que acaba en boda" (59-60). Subsequently Pardo Bazán continued her attack with "Pereda y su último libro," in which she focuses with devastating vigor on his earlier *El buey suelto* (71-72). Furthermore, as we have shown, the Countess could not resist continuing this polemic in her novels—with the nickname "Gedeón" being part of her arsenal.

The second of the uniquely personal nicknames comes from a love letter to Galdós.

To fully savor its import, it will be helpful to focus first on some details of the Doña Emilia-Don Benito relationship. Their intimacy was consummated in Frankfurt, Germany, during a European trip the two took together in 1886 (and she would subsequently recall the rapture of that experience (*Cartas* 16, 49). At that time she was 35 years of age and Galdós was 43. It was also a time when Pardo Bazán looked up to Galdós as a font of wisdom and enthusiasm concerning literary matters. In one of her letters, she affirms that she is looking forward not only to making love, but afterwards to the fact that "hablaremos tan dulcemente de literatura" (*Cartas* 86). The latter included listening to the plots of his novels (*Cartas* 56) and his "planes literarios" (*Cartas* 86). She assured Galdós that such interest was not "caridad," but "acendrada ternura": "lo mismo que te abro los brazos, te velaría enfermo, o te ayudaría en el trabajo literario" (*Cartas* 23).

She also reveals that Galdós assured her no one could ever love her as intensely as he did (*Cartas* 70) and she reminds him that "[T]u me has estrechado contra el corazón, prodigándome nombres dulces y cariñitos inefables" (*Cartas* 56). She, in turn, reciprocated with repeated assurances that she loved him, spoke of a fusion of souls (*Cartas* 33) and revealed that she had spent an entire night dreaming of him (*Cartas* 86).

In addition to enthusiasm for love-making, the Countess also revealed demonstrations of playful tenderness: a desire to nibble his cheek (*Cartas* 86, 93), pull his moustache (*Cartas* 83), and have him wear a newly gifted necktie (*Cartas* 50). Additionally, although she proffered such affectionate pronouncements as "te aplastaré" (*Cartas* 86) and "[T]e abrazo fuerte, a ver si te deshago, y te reduzco a polvo' (*Cartas* 56), she was continually solicitous regarding Don Benito's health: insomnia (*Cartas* 40-41), headaches (*Cartas* 33, 45), appetite (*Cartas 25,* 50), and smoking (*Cartas 25,* 92). Pointedly, she also made repeated assurances: "Siempre me he reprimido algo por miedo de causarte daño; a alterar tu querida salud." She also added: "Siempre te he mirado (no te rías ni me pegues) como los maridos robustos a las mujeres delicaditas y tiernamente amadas, que tienen con ellas *menágements"* (*Cartas* 86).

It was no easy matter for Doña EmilIa, mother of three children and not divorced,[6] to keep her secret rendezvous with Galdós. Time and place were arranged by secret correspondence. On one occasion when Galdós did not come, the Countess waited for hours in her carriage, tried in vain to find him elsewhere, and subsequently penned him: "Por Dios, no me quites este afecto que necesito y acaso necesitaré más cada día que pase" (*Cartas* 64). Many more details concerning their intimacy may be seen in Pardo Bazán's letters to Galdós, but those mentioned above should suffice to give a good indication of the intensity of the feelings that the Countess had for Galdós.

Thus one sees that any nickname from the secret love letters to Galdós used elsewhere could have emotionally charged overtones. Such is the case with the second of our special nicknames. In a very early, undated love letter to Don Benito, Doña Emilia refers to herself as 'tu Suriña" (*Cartas* 32). In *Morriña* (1889) the male protagonist, Rogelio Padriñas, asks the family servant, Esclavitud, for whom he has an amorous attraction, the Galician word for dove. She replies that it is "suriña," (260; ch. 9), and he repeatedly uses

this as an affectionate pet name for Esclavitud—until the intervention of his mother, Doña Aurora, who diverts her son's attention by buying him a beautiful young mare. As Doña Aurora had hoped, Rogelio quickly changes love objects. He names the mare "Suriña," thus giving away the special nickname of affection that he had bestowed on Esclavitud. He no longer has time for the latter, because "el tocador de un caballo fino lleva casi tanto tiempo como el de una mujer primorosa" (341; ch. 20). Moreover, Rogelio feels strongly "esa ternura que nace de la posesión," and he also must buy riding gear for himself and his horse, which is "lo que podemos llamar las galas de boda de la equitación" (342; ch. 20). Then he experiences "todo distracción, todo embeleso en la encantadora luna de miel del muchacho con su caballo" (342; ch. 20), as he is proud to show off his new mount. Pardo Bazán even insinuates the sex act itself (with orgasm) in the following description:

¡Qué inexplicable deleite al pasearla en las frondosas arboledas de la Moncloa, al ver acercarse un carruaje, en cuyo fondo se reclina una bella enlutada, y bajo la fascinación del mirar de la gentil desconocida, ostentar la montura, hacer piernas, caracolear y lucir su gallardía, cubriéndola de espuma y sudor! ¡Que placer ir variando de aires, ya el rítmico paso, ya el animado trote, ya el ardiente galope; y al halagar con su cariñosa palmada el cuello del obediente bruto, sentirle resoplar de placer, estremeciéndose todos sus sensibles nervios y su vigorosa y enjuta musculatura, como talle de jovencilla al rodearlo el brazo de ágil pareja y disponerse al vals! (342; ch. 20)

However, late in the novel Esclavitud urgently demands Rogelio's attention. His mother is planning to discharge her into the service of a *viejo verde* member of her *tertulia.* Now Rogelio again employs "Suriña," along with the affectionate variants: "Suriña blanca," "Sur," and "paloma." With such words, as well as the assurances, "Te quiero mucho, hermosa," and "Ya convenceremos a mamá" (364; ch. 23), consolation becomes seduction. However, as every reader knows, Rogelio does not keep his word and Esclavitud commits suicide. Thus the nickname and its variants, employed exclusively by Rogelio, have an important role to play in the unfolding of the plot.

Before the appearance of *Morriña* in 1889**,** Galdós already had a new "dove," Concha-Ruth Morell. [7] To add insult to injury, Doña Emilia subsequently had to be present during the rehearsals of *Realidad*, in which Concha-Ruth had a minor role.[8] I would like to suggest that Pardo Bazán degraded the pet name she had used in her correspondence with Galdós by shifting it in her published fiction from that of a young woman to a horse as a sign to Galdós of his betrayal: just as Galdós shifted his love interest to Concha, from "Suriña," Rogelio shifts his interest and Emilia's intimate nickname, to a horse, establishing as well the implicit analogy: Concha-mare. Also may this not be a way of shucking-off her role as Galdós's eager lover, and laying it to rest, by placing it forever beyond reach symbolically on an animal, which departs with it, so to speak? If these assumptions are valid, then we have a better understanding of the sexual intercourse imagery: the pleasurable experiences Galdós has had with his" princesa galaica" (Cartas 69) are also a thing of the past—and they belong now only to his new relationship.[9]

Pardo Bazán sent a copy of *Morriña* to Galdós (whose Juanito Santa Cruz in

Fortunata y Jacinta had shifted a nickname from one love object to an another),[10] and there is no record of the nickname "Suriña" being used other than in the Don Benito-Doña Emilia relationship—and in the novel *Morriña.* Pointedly, in the preceding novel, *Insolación*, as she develops a fictional account paralleling her own intimacy with José Lázaro Galdiano, Pardo Bazán prefers to express her own "love bird" imagery as "dos tórtolas" (159; ch. 19), in addition to a repeated use of the word "palomar" (158 and throughout; ch. 18).[11]

Before focusing on the third of our sobriquets, a consideration of Pardo Bazán's early years will be helpful. Doña Emilia's own aspirations are already evident —Carmen Bravo Villasante affirms —in the unfulfilled female protagonist of the early novelette *La dama joven*:

> La breve novela resulta autobiográfica. Emilia como la dama joven, quería un destino ancho, grande, hermoso. Como aquella protagonista de la novela quería aplausos, gloria literaria, viajar a ciudades grandes por ella nunca vistas, y, como la protagonista, tiene que escoger entre un destino brillante aunque, al aparecer, peligroso, y una vida oscura." (100)

As already mentioned, the Countess herself did not choose "una vida oscura," when she was willing to separate from her husband rather than curtail her literary preferences and career. Additional information regarding Pardo Bazán's formative years is found in her own "Apuntes autobiógraficos," which the publishers of *Los pazos de Ulloa* requested as an introduction for that novel. Here one sees that she was a precocious child of many interests and a voracious reader. Between the ages of eight and nine, she read the *Bible, Don Quijote*, and Cervantes's *Novelas Ejemplares*. At age ten she was reading such works as Plutarch's *Varones Ilustres*, and the *Ilíada.*

Encouraged by her father to believe that women could do anything that a man could (Bravo Villasante 15), Doña Emilia was self-confident, endowed with a lively curiosity, and had almost boundless energy. After devouring the books in her father's library, she repeatedly gained access to the libraries of others in order to continue her reading. Although married at the age of sixteen, this status (and a new social life in Madrid) did not long impinge on her intellectual endeavors. And before she utilized the nickname we shall be discussing, Doña Emilia had become a very well-known novelist, had travelled widely, had met the leading literati of France, had done a journalistic assignment in Rome for Madrid's *El Imparcial*—and much more. Moreover, as she wrote Galdós, she had gained financial independence, not only from her husband but also from her parents. With a goal of 15 "cuartillas diarias" (*Cartas* 90), she was willing to work "7 y 8 horas diarias, [. . . aunque] me duele la muñeca de tanto escribir" (*Cartas* 80). Because of these efforts, she was able to live "exclusivamente del trabajo literario" (*Cartas* 90).

Such achievements could have justified a more exalted self-reflecting sobriquet than "Feíta," which is the nickname Doña Emilia chooses to bestow upon her creation, Fe Neira. The latter is a major character in *Doña Milagros* (1894) and *Memorias de un solterón* (1896). In the first of these novels, the narrating father explains that his daughter

has "el nombre de la primera de las virtudes teológicas: Fe; por lo cual sus hermanas empeñadas en hacerla rabiar siempre, no la llamaban más que Feíta (y la verdad es que no se pasaba de hermosa") (35; ch. 2). Subsequently, in *Memorias de un solterón* a different narrator (Mauro Pareja) explains for the benefit of the sequel's reader: "[P]ues no necesita el lápiz esmerarse para no alterar líneas de belleza. Feíta (diminutivo algo injurioso de Fe), no es linda, aunque no tampoco repulsiva ni desagradable" (151; ch. 8). In fact, it turns out that from the point of view of the narrator, in spite of her short, unkempt hair and sloppy, somewhat masculine garb, Feíta becomes (for him) quite attractive. At this point her nickname has become ironic (194; ch. 12).

Of all the characters appearing throughout her novels, the one who most resembles Pardo Bazán in regard to interests, attitude, behavior, and aspirations is "Feíta" Neira. We learn the most about this character in *Memorias de un solterón*, where she reveals that she has unsuccessfully begged her father on bended knee for permission to attend, as does her less talented brother, an institute of higher learning. Moreover, she adds that even if she had tuition money, the institute would not admit her without her father's permission. His opinion (unlike that of Pardo Bazán's own father) is that "Coser, bordar, rezar y barrer [. . .] le basta a una señorita" (155; ch. 85). Consequently, ("revoltosa")[12] "Feíta" is determined to become self-educated. Moreover, she has (in accord with her baptismal name) faith that she can have her own profession, be self-sufficient financially, and have not only freedom of movement, but also entrance into spheres of society currently open only to men.[13] All of this is well demonstrated when Feíta comes without chaperone to the domicile of the narrator (Mauro Pareja). Now enjoying self-demanded freedom to walk about the city by herself, she also earns her own money by tutoring individual clients. Having just done so in the same building, she has no reservations about calling on the bachelor narrator in order to request permission to use an adjacent library, which has been entrusted to his care. During this visit, Feíta has an opportunity to present persuasively her ideas concerning the need for greater freedom and equality for women (Chapters 11-12).[14] Because she is obtaining these freedoms, Feíta also comes to have the self-confidence and flexibility required to manage the family household successfully, when necessity demands. Very importantly, she can later enter into matrimony (after first declining) at the time of her own choosing, and be a truly equal and helpful partner. Feíta's early intellectual accomplishments and affirmations of personal freedom**,** María Ángeles Ayala affirms, "hacen possible que el lector indentifique a este personaje con Doña Emilia Pardo Bazán en sus años de juventud, tal como aparece en los *Apuntes autobiográficos*" (153, n. 166). As numerous scholars have detailed, Pardo Bazán campaigned throughout her career to facilitate the acquisition of the fundamental rights, aspired to by her character "Feíta Neira," for all Spanish women.[15] And part of Pardo Bazán's rejoinder to male polemicists, who even at times disparaged her physical appearance,[16] was to give her "mujer nueva" character, with self-effacing modesty and good taste, the nickname "Feíta,"—albeit with charming attenuations.

In summation, we see that Pardo Bazán's versatile artistry is evidenced in her

successful application of uniquely personal nicknames, which range from a very minor character to the female protagonists of two important novels. Unlike Galdós and Alas, who did not work creatively with *apodos* from their polemics or their sentimental experiences, Pardo Bazán did use nicknames in her published fiction, which sometimes had referents in personal experiences, concerning which she had strong feelings. Rather than hiding or denying these feelings, Doña Emilia chose to entertain her reader with creative echoes of these experiences. This procedure not only made for interesting characterizations and, sometimes, plot developments, but it also enables us to see how Pardo Bazán could use her fiction to express, and, when necessary, sublimate these feelings in a respectable, socially acceptable manner. Anger, love rejected, and self-image are the three most patent issues dealt with in the sobriquets we have discussed. To be explicit, Doña Emilia could continue her aggressive polemic with Pereda by belittling the protagonist of his *El buey suelto*; to Galdós she could express the intensity of her hurt feelings by discarding her intimate nickname and giving it to an animal; and with the modest sobriquet "Feíta," she could feel secure as she explained and justified her faith in her own aspirations—which she felt should be open to all Spanish women.

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NOTES

[1] For Galdós, see Chamberlin: "Cultural Nicknames" 16-30, "A Further Consideration" 75-88, "Verosimilitud" 1-21, and Moncy Gullón "Introduction" XIX-XX; for Alas, Chamberlin "Nicknames" 75-78; and Moncy Gullón, "Naming" 159-60.

[2] These variegated nicknames of affection appear throughout her *Cartas a Galdós.*

[3] Carmen Bravo Villasante (96-98) details the reactions of Pardo Bazán's husband, a Carlist, to local criticism concerning the publication of *La tribuna*—which includes a vigorous "Viva la República federal." Additionally, he heard charges that the novel utilized the practices of Naturalism discussed in *La cuestión palpitante,* that excommunication was imminent, and that he should be able to control his own wife. After a very stormy confrontation, Doña Emilia announced that she would take her novel to Rome, where indeed a cardinal assured her that there was nothing ecclesiastically offensive in her novel.

[4] For details, see Pattison 76-78.

[5] On another occasion Doña Emilia said, "[F]ue una de esas cosas impensadas y casi inconscientes, que al más pintado le ocurren. Allí sí que no peque contra el amor que te tuve y tengo" (*Cartas* 55).

[6] Pardo Bazán urged Galdós not to worry about her marital status: [E]stoy casada ante el cura, con todas las formalidades, y tengo el convencimiento íntimo de que un divorcio acabaría, moralmente, con el compañero [mi marido]. Construyamos así, con la libertad del arte, la situación que la sociedad podría darnos hecha y que tendríamos que soportar entonces.—Lo que sí es preciso, y se realizará, es que no hay para mí ya ni la contingencia de una nueva aventura [matrimonial]. No la habría, no la habría, no la habría. (*Cartas* 92).

[7] In contrast to Pardo Bazán's correspondence with Galdós, only selected samples of Concha-Ruth Morell's letters have been published. In these, the use of nicknames appears to be more numerous and more exuberant than those in *Tristana*. Not appearing in the novel, for example, are the Hebrew-based apodos " Melej"(king) and "Baruc" (blessed), as well as nicknames previously used by Galdós in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, such as "Pitusín" and "Fornarino." For more details, see Smith 91-109.

[8] An unexpected illness of the designated director, Emilio Mario, occasioned the need for Pardo Bazán's presence (Smith 109), and years later Galdós's intermediary (José Cubas) reports to Galdós that he has delivered the "dinero de Agosto [de 1900]" to "la paloma" (Smith 116).

[9] Women writers have used erotic equine imagery since the earliest days of Spanish literature (Chamberlin, "Horsing Around" 823-39).

[10] Galdós's narrator says, "Al oír esta expresión de cariño ['nena'], Jacinta arrugó el ceño. Ella había heredado la aplicación de la palabreja, que ya le disgustaba por ser como deshecho de una pasión anterior, un vestido o alhaja ensuciados por el uso" (2:206; ch. 1, sec. 5).

[11] I am indebted to Linda Willem (Butler Univ.) for calling my attention to the "palomar" usage at such an important juncture in the novel.

[12] "Feíta" insists on unconventional dress, and freedom to walk about the city unaccompanied.

[13] As Maryellen Bieder adds, "Feíta comes to assume the role which society reserves for the male [. . .] and in spite of her unconventional behavior , she seems impervious to scandal, assuming a position which society reserves for older women whose honor can no longer be compromised" ("Capitulation" 96-98).

[14] Even the city's male gossip (Primo Cova), who just happens to drop in and is surprised to find her

unaccompanied in a bachelor's quarters, is so impressed with her sincerity and her ideas that he promises that he will not gossip concerning her visit.

[15] See especially, Gomez-Ferrer (29-68), Rodríguez Rodríguez [sic] 195-204 and Heydl-Cortínez 25-27.

[16] Alas, for example, even mentions Pardo Bazán's corpulence (Pattison 77). Such attacks were not uncommon. See especially the polemics between Alas and Luis Bonafoux as detailed by Denise Dupont (292). For all of Alas's reviews of Pardo Bazán's works, see Penas Varela. (I am grateful to Margot Versteeg [Univ. of Kansas] for calling these two works to my attention.)

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